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Chairman: Mr. MacKay ..... (New Zealand)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Kuznetsov

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 108: Programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 (*continued*)

Redeployment of posts (A/59/753)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Acting Controller), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on redeployment of posts (A/59/753), recalled that the General Assembly in its resolution 58/270 had requested the Secretary-General, during the biennium 2004-2005, to commence, on an experimental basis, with the redeployment of posts as necessary to meet the evolving needs of the Organization. Subsequent experience had shown that very few instances existed where staff resources were surplus to all subprogrammes within a particular programme and were therefore available for redeployment to another programme. However, efforts had been made in 2005 to adjust the strategies employed with the aim of utilizing the flexibility afforded the Secretary-General in implementing mandated programmes.

2. Five posts had been identified for redeployment on a permanent basis, including one P-5 post, which was to be redeployed from the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management to strengthen the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and a P-4 post, which was to be redeployed in exchange from the Office of the High Representative to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management. In addition, three posts had already been redeployed from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to Administration, Vienna, following the integration of information technology and human resource functions into the Division of Management at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). A further 12 posts had been redeployed between sections under temporary administrative arrangements. Those redeployments had been made possible by the availability of vacant posts for periods during the biennium pending the completion of the full recruitment and placement process. At the same time, with the increased focus on prioritization, realignment and reallocation of resources within programmes, budget proposals continued to reflect significant numbers of post redeployments within sections, as outlined in paragraph 6 of the note by the Secretary-General.

3. The redeployments had been carried out in strict compliance with the 10 principles set out in paragraph 14 of resolution 58/270. Accordingly, there had been no implications for the Organization's human resources management policies. Given the limited nature of the experience to date, the progress of and lessons learned from the experiment would be addressed in the context of the comprehensive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

4. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the note by the Secretary-General contained elements that were not relevant to the current discussion. Thus, paragraph 5 referred to the temporary redeployment of 12 vacant posts pending the completion of recruitment and placement. That, however, was a normal administrative procedure, which bore no relation to the experiment approved by the General Assembly. The reference in paragraph 6 to the redeployment of posts within the framework of the programme budget was also irrelevant.

5. It would be helpful to know whether the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had been informed periodically of the actions taken by the Secretariat, as requested in paragraph 14 (j) of resolution 58/270. The Group wished to reiterate that the authority to redeploy posts should in no way prevent the Secretary-General from requesting additional posts in the course of the experiment. Moreover, the experiment should not be carried out on the basis of General Assembly resolutions calling for the implementation of decisions within existing resources, nor should it exacerbate high vacancy rates in any budget section. The fact that only five posts had been identified for redeployment in the previous 15 months raised serious questions about the feasibility of the exercise. The note by the Secretary-General should therefore have elaborated on the difficulties encountered, as well as on the implications of the experiment for the Organization's human resources management policies, as requested in paragraph 16 of the resolution.

6. **Mr. Henningstad** (Norway) said that the General Assembly should have granted the Secretary-General broader authority to manage the Organization's human resources. Greater flexibility in the management of the Secretariat and its staff would create a more challenging and rewarding work environment, thus enabling the United Nations to attract a professional

staff that was ready to meet the challenges set by the international agenda and, in particular, by the Millennium Declaration.

7. The note by the Secretary-General should have contained a more in-depth discussion of the reasons for the low number of redeployments, with a particular focus on the provisions of paragraph 14 of resolution 58/270. In his delegation's view, those provisions were too restrictive and should be abolished. Indeed, it should be a routine matter for the Secretary-General to redeploy staff according to the Organization's priorities.

8. In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), the Secretary-General had called for sweeping reform of the Secretariat. The Committee's discussion of post redeployments should be seen in that context. Member States should be ready to work with the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive reform and modernization of the Organization, a process in which the Committee would play a crucial role.

9. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that his delegation attached great importance to the redeployment of posts to meet the Organization's evolving needs. It looked forward to seeing progress on the issue in the context of the second performance report and the comprehensive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session and would revert to the matter at that time.

10. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) said that the note by the Secretary-General was inadequate and lacked transparency. It did not give a clear picture of the status of implementation of the experiment or of its impact on external recruitment, nor did it provide sufficient justification for the redeployment of posts between sections. Also, the meaning of the last sentence of paragraph 3 was unclear. The note stated in paragraph 5 that 12 posts had been redeployed under temporary administrative arrangements to meet immediate needs, either of a short-term nature or pending longer-term arrangements. The Secretariat should explain what type of longer-term arrangements it envisaged. Lastly, he feared that the redeployment of posts from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime would increase its dependence on extrabudgetary resources.

11. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that the Secretariat had repeatedly stressed the need for greater flexibility in human resources management. It was therefore disappointing that it had not made more use of the flexibility it had been afforded to move posts between programmes. Given that the Advisory Committee had suggested the experiment, it would be interesting to hear its views on the progress made thus far. His delegation continued to believe that human resources should be redeployed to high-priority areas. Indeed, the Secretary-General himself had made that point in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/59/2005). His delegation looked forward to resuming consideration of the issue at the sixtieth session. In the meantime, the Secretariat should pursue its efforts more rigorously.

12. **Ms. Soni** (Canada) said that, while it was for Member States to determine the Organization's goals, the Secretary-General must be afforded flexibility in using the resources given him to pursue those goals. In particular, as the chief administrative officer of the United Nations, he must be able to deploy the necessary human resources to respond effectively to changing circumstances. The General Assembly had initiated a modest experiment with many caveats. Nevertheless, the Secretariat must try harder to utilize the limited flexibility it had been given.

13. **Mr. van den Bossche** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Union had strongly supported the initiative to allow the Secretary-General greater discretion in the deployment of the Organization's human resources and was disappointed that it had not produced the desired results. However, the experiment must continue, since it was important to redeploy posts to high-priority activities. The European Union was prepared to take up the matter again at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. It trusted that, at that time, the Committee would have the benefit of the views of ACABQ. Delegations should also take into account the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/59/2005), which contained a number of related proposals.

14. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that the identification of only five posts for permanent redeployment cast doubt on the feasibility of the experiment and on the possibility of its expansion. Some delegations appeared to support a corporate approach to resource management, whereby Member States would merely

approve the overall level of resources and the Secretary-General would decide how best to utilize them. That would not be appropriate, however, in a highly political organization. Moreover, it was for the Member States, not the Secretary-General, to determine the priorities of the United Nations and its evolving needs. One of the underlying problems of the experiment was that the Committee had approved it without having sufficient information on its likely implications. He understood that it had been difficult for the Secretariat to provide such information because the proposal had originated elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Committee must learn from its mistakes and ensure that, in future, its decisions were better informed.

15. **Mr. Sach** (Acting Controller), said that the Administration had included in paragraph 6 of the note information on posts redeployed within the framework of the programme budget in order to place the current experiment in context. The preparation of the budget provided an opportunity to realign resources with programme needs, which was part of the normal budgetary process. The reallocation of resources during budget implementation was exceptional. Indeed, while some fine-tuning was usually necessary, the redeployment of large numbers of posts would imply that the Secretariat had prepared, and Member States had approved, a budget that did not meet the Organization's needs.

16. The recent redeployment of three posts from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to Administration, Vienna, following the integration of information technology and human resource functions into the Division of Management at UNOV, would enable administrative and common services to be delivered more efficiently, thereby releasing resources for substantive programmes. It was a good example of the potential benefits to programmes when the Administration had greater flexibility.

17. There had been no changes in the Organization's human resources management policies as a result of the experiment. Indeed, that had been one of the preconditions for its implementation. Likewise, there had been no impact on external recruitment, since the overall number of posts remained the same and vacancies continued to be advertised on Galaxy.

18. While no special arrangements had been made for the provision of information to the Advisory Committee, the Secretariat would prepare a total of four reports on post redeployments during the current biennium. In addition, it would be happy to respond to any specific query addressed to it. With regard to the use of the phrase "longer-term arrangements" in paragraph 5 of the note, the Administration had wanted to signal that some of the 12 temporary redeployments might become permanent, in which case they would have to be reflected in the budget proposals for 2006-2007. Lastly, he wished to underscore that the scope for redeployment of posts depended on the number of vacancies. Given the current low vacancy rates for Professional staff, there would not be a large number of posts available for redeployment.

19. **Mr. Kuznetsov** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) recalled that the Advisory Committee had pointed out in paragraph 65 of its first report on the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 (A/58/7 and Corr.1), that, as part of normal personnel practice, the continuing need for a post must be evaluated prior to filling that post again. The allocation of posts must be seen as dynamic, rather than static; posts must be reviewed periodically to ensure that their functions were consistent with current objectives. Staff turnover provided an element of flexibility, especially if the staffing table was managed as a whole, and enabled easier redeployment and reclassification of posts. In paragraphs 75 to 79 of the same report, the Advisory Committee had elaborated on the concept of managing the Secretariat as a whole, indicating that departments would not "own" particular posts at particular grade levels.

20. The Advisory Committee had received no formal information on the progress of the redeployment experiment, but had discussed it in connection with the first performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. It had not considered the note currently before the Committee, not least because it was occupied with considering the peacekeeping budget. However, the Secretariat had informed it of constraints on the experiment, such as the limited future scope for redeployment with 810 posts having already been identified for such action in the 2004-2005 programme budget. He regarded the note as a small first step towards changing the culture of managing posts and looked forward to bolder thinking and more positive results in the report which the General Assembly, by its resolution 58/270, had

requested the Secretary-General to submit at its sixtieth session.

21. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that, while he fully understood the explanations of the Acting Controller and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee regarding the motivation for the experiment, General Assembly resolution 58/270 required the Secretary-General to inform the Advisory Committee periodically about action taken in the context of that experiment. That requirement had been included for good reason and went beyond a mere exchange of views. The Advisory Committee should receive details regularly, without having to solicit them.

Review of the regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account (continued) (A/59/397)

22. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Officer-in-Charge of the Programme Planning and Budget Division), responding to questions related to the programme budget, said that paragraph 14 of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account (A/59/397) gave the misleading impression of being a quotation from General Assembly resolution 58/270. It was in fact only an explanation, in the Secretariat's words rather than in those of the resolution, of the reasons for the review of the regular programme of technical cooperation and for the evaluation instructions given to the consultant.

23. In deciding against recosting the maintenance base of the budget section which related to the Development Account, the Secretariat had been guided by the Advisory Committee, which had opposed such a step in its second report on the Development Account (A/53/7/Add.1).

24. In considering whether the regular programme of technical cooperation should be discussed by the Economic and Social Council or by the Second Committee, the Secretariat would be guided by the wishes of the Fifth Committee but had in fact already indicated its support for such a step in paragraph 104 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/397). The Secretariat welcomed any proposal from intergovernmental bodies which might improve the activities of the regular programme. In that connection, the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice discussed those activities at their own initiative and at the suggestion of the Secretary-General.

25. The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, rather than the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, had presented the report because, although the Development Account had a programme manager, namely, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the regular programme of technical cooperation did not, a situation which the Secretary-General wished to address. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs was nevertheless closely involved in preparing the report.

26. **Mr. Zaitsev** (Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), responding to the substantive questions asked at the Committee's 38th meeting, said that the proposals regarding the regular programme of technical cooperation contained in the report of the Secretary-General were likely to complement, rather than clash with, the outcome of the September 2005 high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. That meeting would no doubt discuss development, emphasize the need to follow up major United Nations summits and conferences and create an even greater need for capacity-building. Consequently, he could see no need for the high-level meeting to change the direction of technical cooperation, and was confident that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD and the regional commissions would provide vital expertise. Current legislation guided the regular programme sufficiently well, but the Secretariat looked forward to further guidance from the General Assembly.

27. Activities under the regular programme of technical cooperation delivered assistance at the national level and were therefore closely comparable to field activities. In the past, the regular programme had included field projects, which appeared as a concept in the Development Account section of the programme budget, but scarcity of resources had all but eliminated them, as they required infrastructure and predictable funding.

Other matters

28. **Ms. Haji-Ahmed** (Director of the Operational Services Division in the Office of Human Resources Management), replying to questions posed earlier by

the representative of Egypt concerning the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, said that the three D-2 posts in question had been posted on the Galaxy system on 31 December 2004 with a deadline for applications of 1 March 2005. The vacancy announcements had not been backdated and they complied with the 60-day rule. The D-1 Executive Officer post in the Department of Safety and Security had been advertised on the Galaxy system under the "administration" occupational group on 24 January 2005, again in compliance with the 60-day rule.

29. The job descriptions for the posts had been formulated under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, as the new Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security had not taken up his post until 28 February 2005.

30. Those permanent missions which had expressed a wish for hard copies of vacancy announcements continued to receive them, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 57/305 and 59/266. The Office of Human Resources Management had recently sent a note verbale to the missions asking them to confirm whether or not they wished to be supplied with hard copies and 18 of them had so far indicated that they did.

31. **Mr. Almstrom** (Officer-in-Charge of the Division of Regional Operations in the Department of Safety and Security) said that work on establishing job descriptions had begun immediately after the adoption of the resolution setting up the Department of Safety and Security. The new Under-Secretary-General had reviewed the job descriptions for the D-2 posts on taking up his functions and had examined subsequent job descriptions as and when they were drawn up.

32. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that, as General Assembly resolution 59/266 had been adopted on 23 December 2004, just before a holiday period, it was strange that vacancy announcements had apparently been posted on the Galaxy system on 31 December 2004. His delegation was particularly concerned about the advertising of the D-2 posts, out of concern to see countries adequately represented in senior management positions. However, despite its close monitoring of the Galaxy system, it had seen no vacancy announcements for the D-2 posts until late January 2005 and therefore questioned whether the 60-day rule had been complied with.

33. He saw no logic in advertising the Executive Officer post as part of the "administration" occupational group. It would surely have been better to advertise it as part of the "security" occupational group, or at least to refer to it under both groups.

34. Lastly, other delegations which had requested hard copies of vacancy announcements had confirmed to him that they had received none for the D-2 posts under discussion.

35. **Ms. Haji-Ahmed** (Director of the Operational Services Division in the Office of Human Resources Management) reiterated that the posts in question had been advertised on the Galaxy system on 31 December 2004, as confirmed by the receipt of one application on that day and further applications throughout January and February 2005. The post of Executive Officer for the Department had indeed been advertised under the "administration" occupational grouping, but the vacancy announcement had begun by indicating clearly that the organizational unit concerned was the Department of Safety and Security.

36. The Office of Human Resources Management transmitted copies of vacancy announcements to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for onward transmittal to the permanent missions which had requested them. If that procedure had broken down, she would be happy to re-examine it.

37. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that the relevant General Assembly resolutions provided that hard copies of vacancy announcements must be distributed to delegations which did not request otherwise. However, the representative of the Office of Human Resources Management had indicated that delegations must "opt in" to the arrangement rather than "opt out" of it. She would like the wording of the resolutions to be checked.

38. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) confirmed that paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 59/266 required distribution of vacancy announcements to all delegations except those which indicated otherwise. The first vacancy announcement he had seen in his seven months in New York had arrived only one week previously.

39. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) thanked the representatives of Nigeria and Cuba for confirming the requirement to distribute hard copies of vacancy announcements and requested a suspension of the

meeting to permit his and other delegations to formulate a proposal on the matter.

40. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India) recalled that the Committee had also approved posts for the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate in December 2004, and asked what progress had been made towards filling those posts.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

41. **Mr. Elnaggar** (Egypt) said that he had taken note of the Secretariat's interpretation of the wording of paragraph 5 of resolution 59/266. Before taking a position on the matter, he would like the Secretariat to respond, at the Committee's next formal meeting, to the delegations' questions on vacancy announcements.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.